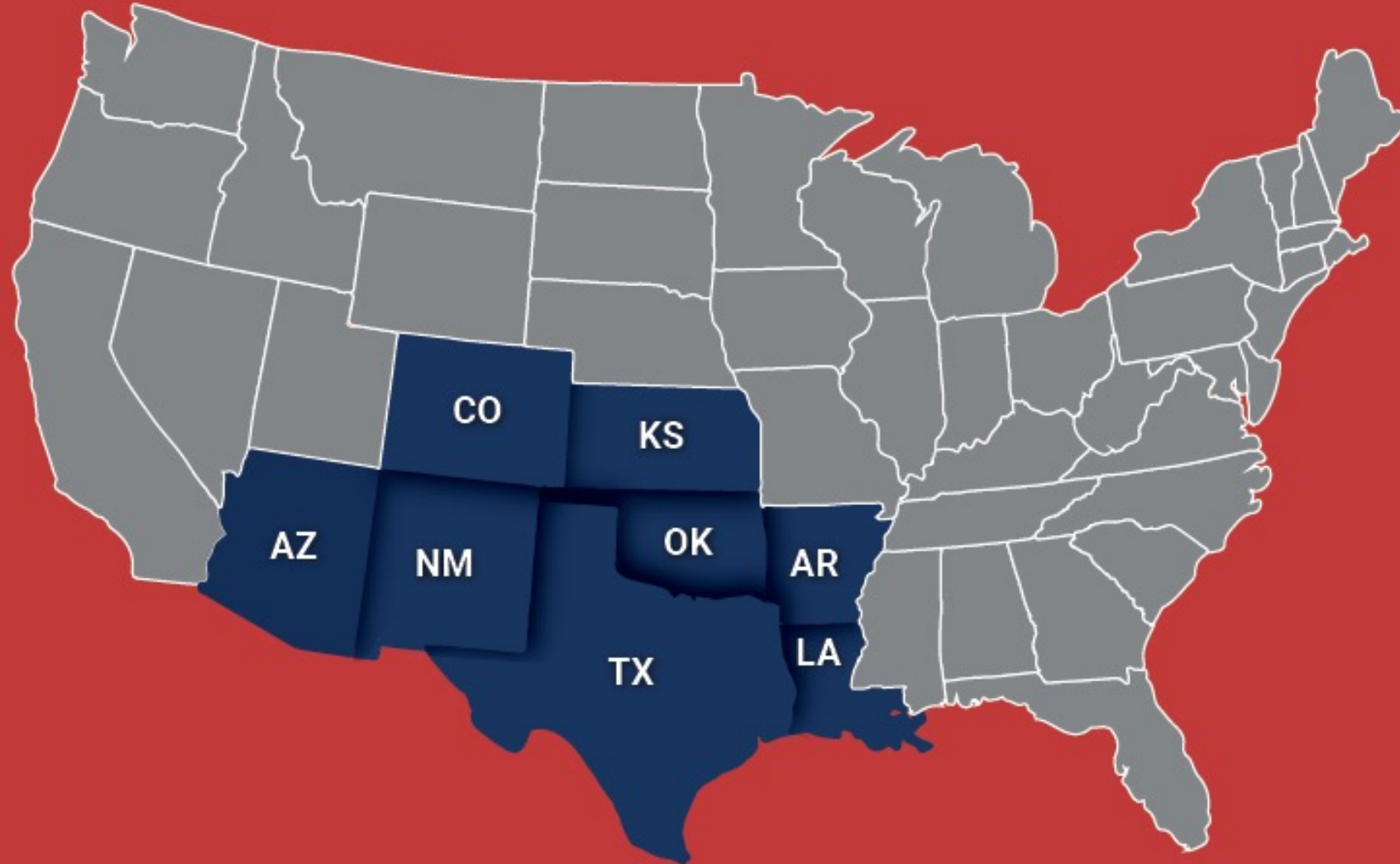


The Small Vehicle Shortage & Crisis in Hiring Front-Line Staff



Rich Sampson
Executive Director
South West Transit Association

THE SWTA NATION







How did we ever think that the definition of success was simply moving more unhappy people?



**When sometimes
the greatest value
we can bring our
communities is so
much bigger?**



**Why “bus service”
doesn’t only
depend on how
many buses you
have?**



Or when you have plenty of money to buy buses but no one will sell them to you?

SMALL VEHICLE DELIVERY DELAYS

**12-24 month
avg. delay in
delivery**

Primarily due to production challenges involving computer chip components, deliveries of cutaway and minivan vehicles most often used for rural demand-response & urban paratransit services are currently delayed between one & two years from procurement date. Additionally, these vehicles compete with personal and commercial vehicle markets while fixed-route buses generally are an exclusive market for transit. Also, manufacturers assign lower priority to transit orders than other fleet vehicles such as ambulance and highway.

OPERATOR SHORTAGES

**Openings =
missed trips &
↓ reliability**

As COVID has reset labor availability and pay trends, transit is experiencing operator shortages at systems of all sizes. While many agencies have increased pay and benefits and offered other incentives, unfilled driver & operator positions are leading to service impacts such as late or cancelled trips and existing workforce are working longer shifts or more overtime. Competition from private sector employers make offering attractive wages difficult for transit providers with limited budget flexibility.

LIMITED LOCAL MATCH

**"We can buy
buses but can't
afford to run
them"**

Especially in rural communities and smaller urban areas, attracting local investment that's required to match federal funding has always been a challenge. That reality was enhanced by emergency COVID funding from federal programs. While needed & welcome to respond to the initial & unexpected emergence of COVID, many localities have redirected funding previously assigned to transit systems to cover other budgetary needs. Additional federal funds requiring match compound the difficulty in lining-up new matching funds.

OLDER VEHICLES MEAN MORE UPKEEP COSTS

**More
maintenance
hamstrings
budgets**

Although maintenance professionals at transit agencies do expert work in keeping their vehicle fleets on the road far longer than expected, the cost of materials and labor time to maintain older vehicles grows with every day and every mile in service. The longer these systems wait for delivery of already-ordered vehicles or cannot advance new procurement due to absent local match means trip reliability goes down and operating budgets become strained, potentially leading to service cuts down the road.



**TNCS, 2010-2019:
We need major
disruptors to how
we do business...**



**COVID: Hold my
beer...**

Historic Context



“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, we must think anew and act anew...”

— Abraham Lincoln

Small Vehicle Shortage — How did we get here?

Pandemic + Supply Chain

Dwindling number of manufacturers

Weak small bus buying power

“Difficult” procurement processes

Competition



The Cutaway Issue



Chassis shortage



Ambulance issue



Price increases;
big price increases



20,000 vehicle
backlog



Best vehicle?



Vans/Minivans

Standard Buy America Waiver
– focused on vanpools

Big demand and price
increases

Lack of availability

Interest in Buy America waiver
for accessible vans/minivans

The ZEB Contribution Part1

Pro: Federal
Investment

Con: Lack of
Availability

Con: Costly

Con: “Reliably
Unreliable”

Con:
Range/geographic
worries

Con: Charging
infrastructure

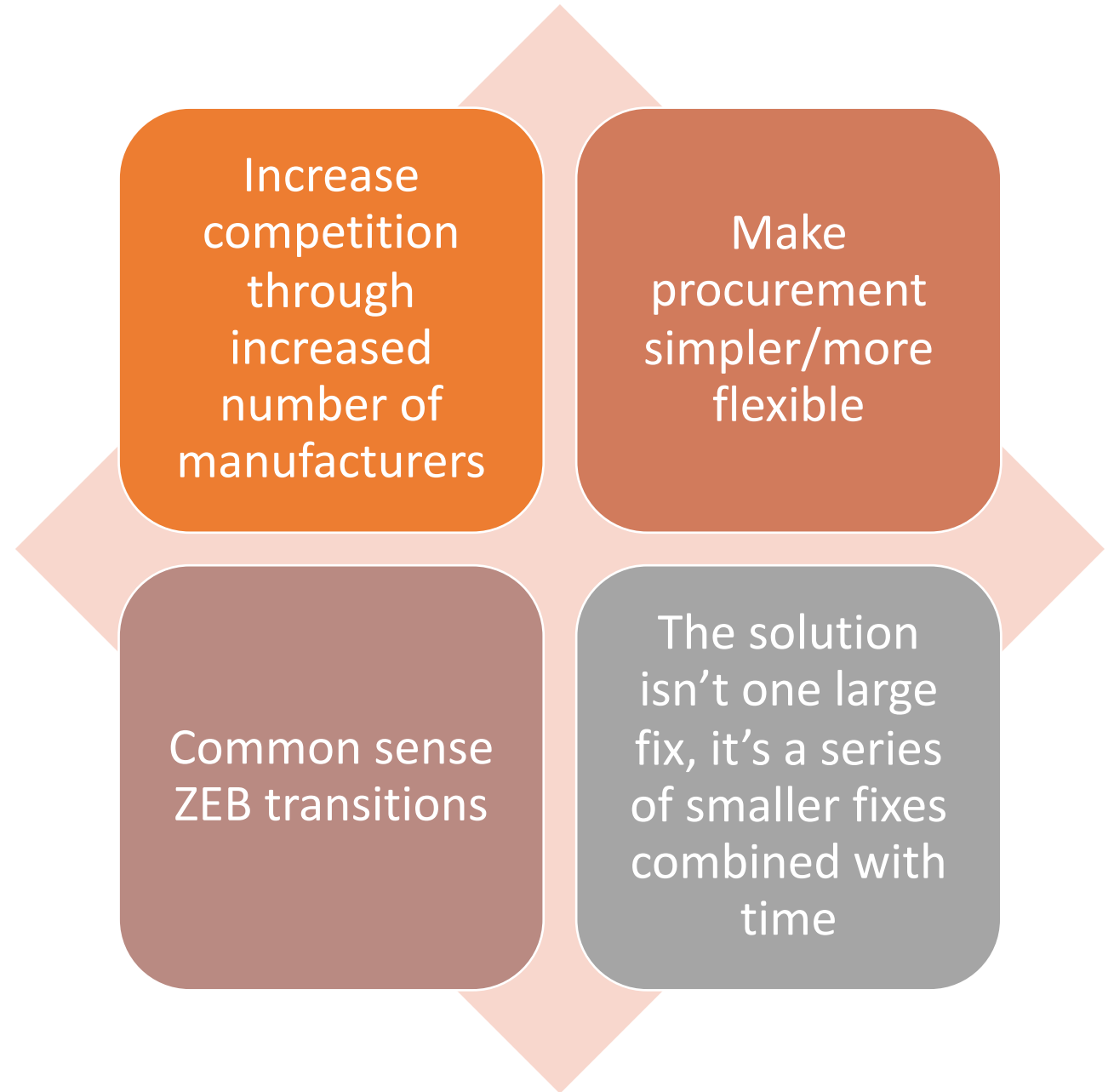
ZEB Reality check

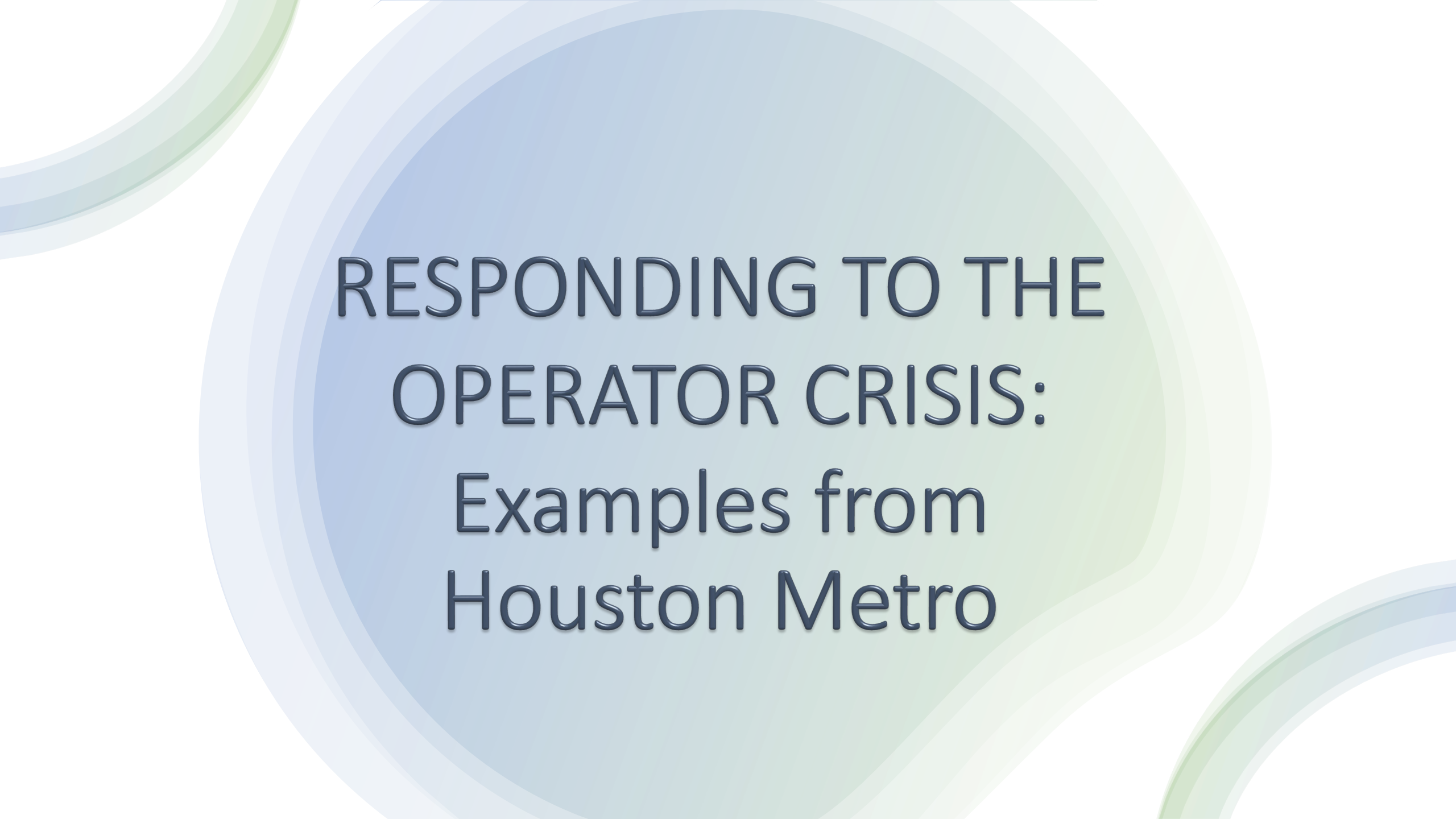


For smaller buses,
we are just starting
the piloting/testing
phase

Importance of
partnerships –
both local and with
the private sector

Policy Goals





RESPONDING TO THE
OPERATOR CRISIS:
Examples from
Houston Metro

WE NEED TO TALK

1

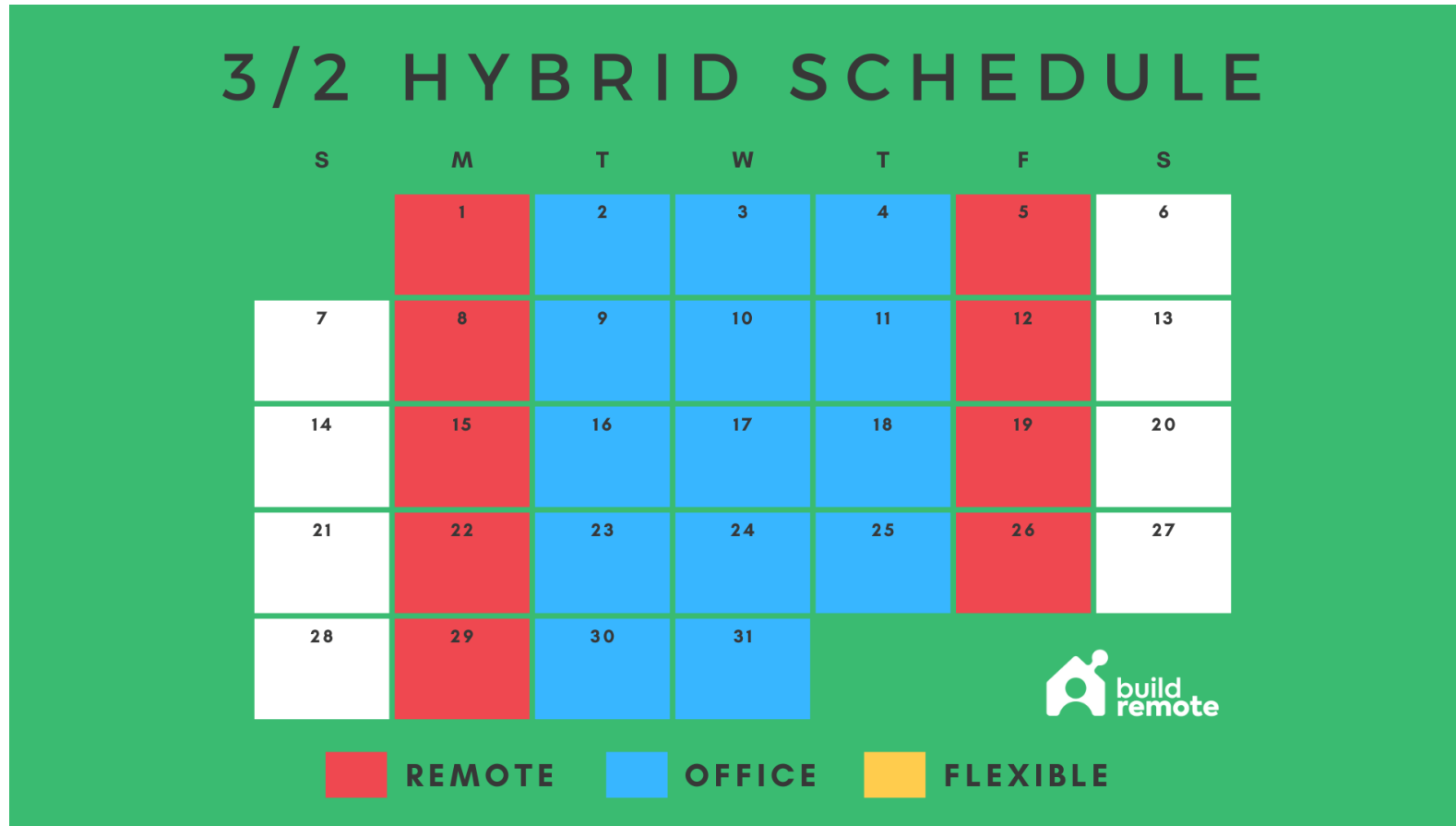
**Admitting you
have a problem
is the first step
towards recovery**

STOP MAKING EXCUSES

“NOBODY WANTS TO WORK ANY MORE!”
A brief history of capitalists complaining that nobody wants to work for starvation wages

2022	According to a new survey released by TinyPulse, 1 in 5 executive leaders agree with this statement: “No one wants to work”. These same leaders cite a “lack of response to job
2014	What has happened to the work ethic in America? Nobody wants to work anymore. It has not always been that way. When I first started to work as a teenager, I saw people work hard.
2006	like nobody wants to work anymore and when they do
1999	“Nobody wants to work anymore,” Cecil said. “They all want to work in front of a computer and make lots of
1981	off this land last week. But they just fooled around. They didn't want to work. Nobody wants to work anymore.
1979	“Nobody wants to work anymore.”
1969	— disgusted businessman called “Nobody Wants to Work Anymore.” Talking about un-
1952	everybody was getting too darned lazy and nobody wants to work anymore. That's the truth if I ever heard it.
1940	trouble is everybody is on relief or a pension — nobody wants to work anymore.”
1937	ams counties are complaining that “Nobody wants to work anymore.”
1922	There is work, it is reported, for 15
1916	it is because nobody wants to work any more unless they can
1905	he answered, “the reason for food scarcity is that nobody wants to work as hard as they used to. I asked a
1894	unreliable. None want to work for wages. next winter? It is becoming apparent that nobody wants to work these hard times.

WHITE COLLAR OFFICE JOBS



FRONTLINE JOBS

- Mediocre pay and benefits
- Outdated work rules
- Growing safety concerns
- Training / Promotional opportunities uneven
- Technology that helps

PAY AND BENEFITS

- Increased pay & split-shift differential
- Awarded paid vacation days sooner
- Improved incentives including Retention and Bi-lingual
- In-service retirement option
- Option to use some vacation time as individual days off
- Expanded tuition reimbursement program

OUTDATED WORK RULES

Work Rules

The dreaded Extraboard or stand-by positions

Every employee's favorite... the Split Shift

Rule 1. The Boss is always right.

Non-consecutive days off

**Rule 2. When the boss is wrong,
refer to Rule 1.**

Fatigue prevention

GROWING SAFETY CONCERNS



Operator safety shields



Live action security monitors

In-service, interior wipe downs



More Bus Controllers for faster response times



TRAINING / PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- ❑ Apprentices Programs
- ❑ Cross Training of frontline Supervisors
- ❑ Revamping training for minor accidents



TECHNOLOGY THAT HELPS



Routing instructions like on your mobile phone

Real-time management and customer updates





Questions?

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SWTA's 2023 Summer
University Conference

August 13-16

Wichita, KS



Conversation